Amendments to the Claims:

1 (currently amended): A method for representing non-structured features that span other tags in a ML document, comprising:

determining a start feature tag location for a non-structured feature; wherein the non-structured feature spans the other tags in the ML document;

determining an end feature tag location for the non-structured feature; and

placing a start feature tag at the start tag location; wherein the start feature tag is an empty tag that does not ~~overlap~~ include other elements; and

placing an end feature tag at the end feature tag location, wherein the end feature tag is an empty tag that does not ~~overlap~~ include other elements; and wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag span other tags while maintaining a well formed ML document.

2 (currently amended): The method of Claim 1, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag include an identifier attribute that associates the start feature tag and the end feature tag.

3 (currently amended): The method of Claim 2, wherein the identifier attribute is set to a same value within the start feature tag and the end feature tag.

4 (original): The method of Claim 2, wherein the ML document is an XML document.

5 (currently amended): The method of Claim 3, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag that span other elements are named differently.

6 (currently amended): The method of Claim 5, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag are bookmarks.

7 (original): The method of Claim 6, further comprising, using the bookmarks to create an index a set of documents.

8 (currently amended):   The method of Claim 5, wherein the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag may be used for at least one function selected from a set comprising: annotating, proofing, range protection, commenting, and permissions.

9 (currently amended):   A computer-readable medium for representing non-structured features that span other tags in a ML document, comprising:

determining locations for a start <u>feature</u> tag and an end <u>feature</u> tag; wherein the location of the start <u>feature</u> tag indicates a starting position for a non-structured <u>feature</u> and the location of the end <u>feature</u> tag represents an ending position for the non-structured feature; <u>wherein the non-structured feature spans the other tags in the ML document;</u> and

placing the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag at the determined locations, wherein the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag are empty tags that span other tags within the ML document while adhering to a well formed ML rule.

10 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 9, wherein at least one of the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag includes an identifier that is used to indicate an association between the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag.

11 (original):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 10, wherein the ML document is an XML document.

12 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 9, wherein the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag each include an attribute that is set to a same value indicating the association between the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag.

13 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 12, wherein the start <u>feature</u> tag and the end <u>feature</u> tag are bookmarks.

14 (original):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 12, further comprising, using the bookmarks to create an index a set of documents.

15 (currently amended):   The computer-readable medium of Claim 11, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag may be used for at least one function selected from a set comprising: annotating, bookmarking, proofing, range protection, commenting, and permissions.

16 (currently amended):   A system for representing non-structured features in a ML document, comprising:

an application that is configured to:

parse a word-processor document;

determining locations for a start feature tag and an end feature tag; and

placing a start feature tag and an end feature tag at the determined locations, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag are empty tags; wherein the location of the start feature tag indicates a starting position for a non-structured feature and the location of the end feature tag represents an ending position for the non-structured feature; and wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag span other tags within the ML document while adhering to a well formed ML rule; and wherein the non-structured feature spans the other tags within the ML document;

output the ML document that may be interpreted by applications that understand a ML; and

a validation engine configured to validate the ML document.

17 (currently amended):   The system of Claim 16, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag includes an identifier as an attribute of the start feature tag and the end feature tag that indicates an association between the start feature tag and the end feature tag.

18 (original):   The system of Claim 10, wherein the ML document is an XML document.

19 (currently amended):   The system of Claim 18, wherein the start feature tag and the end feature tag may be used for at least one function selected from a set comprising: annotating, bookmarking, proofing, range protection, commenting, and permissions.